

FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

04-120

Orleans

EAS.1328

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town/City: EASTHAM

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): North Eastham

Photograph



Address: 450 Steele Road

Historic Name: Christopher and Anastasia Hughes House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: 1932

Source: Title records, Eastham Tax Commitment Books

Style/Form: No Style

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Concrete block

Wall/Trim: Wood shingles/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
None

Major Alterations (*with dates*):
None

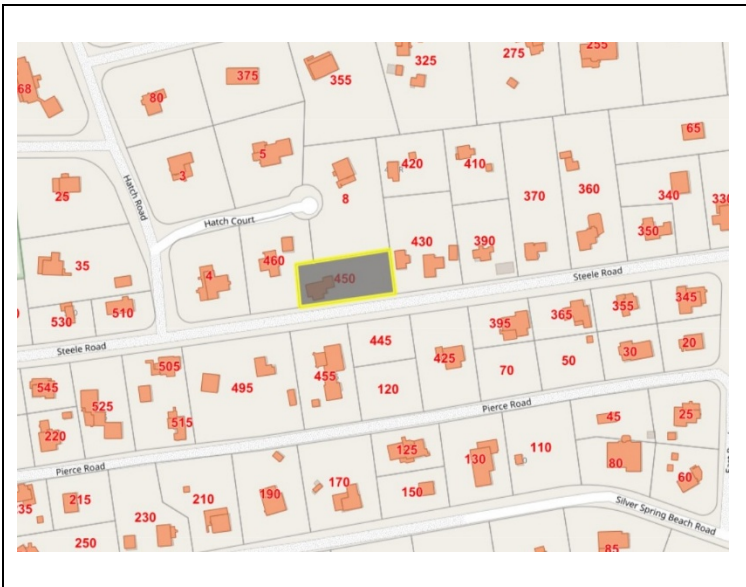
Condition: Good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.27 acres

Setting: This property is located in an area of small cottage lots on the road leading to Cooks Brook Beach. The surrounding area includes modest cottages built from the mid-20th century onward, most set close to the street. This house is also set close to the street on its level parcel. The house is partially obscured from the street by deciduous and evergreen trees and plantings.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant, for

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): April 2025

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

EASTHAM

450 STEELE ROAD

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The Christopher and Anastasia Hughes House, built in 1932, is a modest, one-story cottage with shallow-pitched gable roofs. Its form consists of a side-gable main block, a projecting bay centered on the front elevation that may have begun as an open or screened porch but is now enclosed, and an ell on the right (east) set back from the main block.

The house rests on a low, concrete block foundation. The elevations are clad in wood shingles with plain cornerboards. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles and has projecting, open eaves (typical of early cottage construction). A broad brick chimney rises from the main roof ridge. Fenestration includes wood, 2/2 single-glazed, double-hung sash that may be original to the house. The front entrance is located on the front elevation of the east ell.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

Incorporated as Nauset Plantation in 1646, and changed to Eastham in 1651, Eastham territory originally extended south to Pleasant Bay and north beyond Wellfleet Harbor. The early development pattern for what we now know as Eastham was impacted by its absence of deep-water harbor facilities. Relatively fertile soil led to dispersed agricultural settlement, but residential and commercial development was concentrated to the north at Wellfleet Harbor and to the south at Town Cove and Pleasant Bay. When the separate towns of Wellfleet and Orleans were created in the late-18th century, Eastham became and remained one of the least populated towns on the Cape throughout the 19th century.

In the 19th century, Eastham was the agricultural center of the Outer Cape. Crops evolved over time; corn and dairy were surpassed in the early-20th century by asparagus and turnips - two crops well suited for the sandy soil. In 1900, 58% of Eastham's workers were employed as farmers, but by 1930 that number had dwindled to 21%. Summer resort development, including cottage colonies and subdivisions of former farmland that would transform Eastham, had begun in earnest in the 1920s as middle-class access to car ownership increased and Cape roads were improved.

This house, as well as 530 Steele Road (EAS.1001), were built on land owned by William B. Steele. The road, without any buildings, is shown on the 1910 Barnstable County Atlas. The road was initially called Cook Brook Road, but was later named for William Bradford Steele (1855-1951), a native of Harwich who, according to later deeds, laid out the road himself as a private way until at least 1925. Steele, whose younger brother was South Eastham undertaker James B. Steele, had acquired the former Parker and Rachel Brown house at 1285 Massasoit Road (EAS.86) from the town in 1897 along with fifteen adjacent acres. William B. Steele was the son of East Harwich master mariner William N. Steele and had first gone to sea when he was nine years old. By the mid-1870s he became a barber and lived and worked in Lynn, but by 1898 he was in Eastham and still barbering when he married Blanche Eliza Turner, an Everett native whose family then lived in Eastham. Steele retired to Eastham about 1895 and continued to work part-time as a barber, but he may have begun to develop the Cooks Brook Beach area for summer cottages. In 1913, Steele sold what his deed termed "cottage lot #7," laid out by Steele, on the road leading by his own house to the bay. He sold three more cottage lots, each with sixty-five feet of frontage on the road, in 1921 and 1922.

Steele sold this parcel in 1930 to Christopher J. Hughes of Waltham.¹ According to the Eastham Tax Commitment Books, Hughes was first taxed for a cottage in 1932. Christopher Joseph Hughes (1900-1951) worked in Waltham as an auto mechanic (1930

¹ Barnstable County Registry of Deeds, Book 500/ Page 19.

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census) and manager for a repair garage (1940 census). He married Anastasia Tucker in 1922. They appear to have divorced. In 1945; Christopher Hughes was living in Chicago when he sold this property to Anastasia. She married Willis Dill and was living in Wellfleet in 1952 when she conveyed this property to Constance B. and Curtis E. Dorrie, Jr. of Hingham.² The next year, the Dorries sold this property to Henry W. Wirkala of Hingham.³ Like those before him, Henry appears to have bought this property as a summer house. He was still living in Hingham in 1969 when he sold it to Arnold G. and Christine R. Mercer of Waldwick, NJ.⁴ In 1975, it was sold to the current owner, Benjamin Roger Wood then of Brookline, now of Palmer, MA.⁵

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

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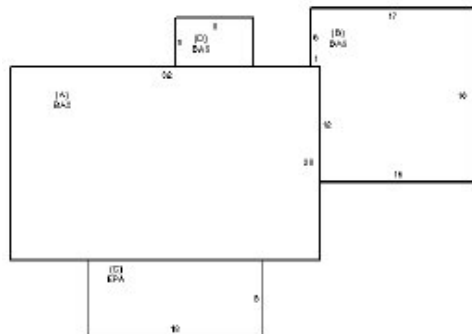


Figure 1. Assessor Sketch Map.



Photo 2. View looking northeast.

² Book 624/ Page 92, 93.

³ Book 857/ Page 204.

⁴ Book 1445/ Page 761.

⁵ Book 2242/ Page 341.